Annex "A " Subparagraph 1g,

Sociological Background

FAMILY

591 In former times the Votic families were much bigger than they are now. The sons usually remained in their father's house, brought their wives there and brought up their families. For this reason, the living rooms were then much bigger than now, each of them accommodating around 20 to 25 persons. Now the families are small, for the single nuclear family is the rule, and children after marriage now leave their parents' house and form their own separate households.

[594] The man is the head of the Votic family, but he does not act always as he pleases. In more important decisions the opinions of the wife and of the grown-up children are also 562 taken into consideration. In former times, the ●596 position of the wife in the family seems to 594 have been considerably lower than it is today. Characteristic are the words said by the bride's mother to her future son-in-law while handing over to him the bride's hair after it is cut: "Take both her hair and her head; you 562 are her master and she is your slave." Im- 264 portant in this respect is also the hierarchy 596 commonly used at the eating table. Oral 594 tradition tells us that in olden times the table was the privileged eating place for the men. The women could take their meals around the fireplace or elsewhere, but the men always used to sit at the table. Even if the men and women ate at the same table, they did not eat

562 at the same time: the men ate first and the
264 women afterwards. When the families in earlier
596 times were very large, the eating was arranged
594 in three shifts: first the men sat at the table, then the women, and finally the children. There are also some data which indicate that formerly the children were not admitted at all to the table but had to eat on the floor from a common wooden dish (naappa). For them a special tablecloth (ursi) was spread on the floor.

In later times when families became smaller, both the men and women used to sit at the same table. But even then the sexes were segregated. The men, in general, sat at the side of the table which was towards the rear corner of the room, and the women opposite them. Due to this custom, the parts of the table have special names which are used even today. The rear part is called starika-lauta 'old man's table' and the front part ämmä-lauta 'woman's table.' They also say that the men sit jumalapoolez 'at God's side,' and the women sit alanurkkaz 'at the lower side.' The same custom of dividing the table according to sexes was observed also by the Ingrians.

Nowadays no such segregation is made and anyone can sit where he wishes.